

To: Lessard - Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

From: Kathy DonCarlos, Land Conservation Coordinator, Northern Waters Land Trust

Copies: Annie Knight, NWLT.

Rick Walsh, Blane Klemek, Dave Trauba; MN DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife.

Jared Mazurek, MN Deer Hunters Association.

Date: December 31, 2025

Subject: Property Purchase with Structures Proposal



Northern Waters Land Trust (NWLT) presented to Lessard - Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) on 12/9/25 regarding an iconic property being acquired with OHF for a new Wildlife Management Area and to request permission to purchase the property and explore various disposition options for six buildings and potentially two of the thirty parcels. An excerpt of the December 2025 draft minutes reports that:

"After discussion, the Council clarified that the acquisition may proceed in compliance with existing Council policy, provided that private funds are used to offset the cost of the buildings, with the understanding that the buildings would be disposed of notwithstanding future Council approval of an alternate plan. The Council suggested that Northern Waters Land Trust prepare a written proposal that would allow for the preservation of habitable buildings to be presented at the January Council meeting to seek Council approval."

NWLT worked with DNR staff, MN Deer Hunters Association, Capable Partners as well as LSOHC staff and DNR Grants staff to consider various options for the buildings of value on two of 30 parcels in the fee title acquisition project.

This team reviewed options to ensure that the recommended options were consistent with Outdoor Heritage Fund Statutes, supported by both LSOHC and DNR Grants staff and would not conflict with DNR management of the future Wildlife Management Area. As the OHF grantee, NWLT also considered the transactional costs, time the property would remain in grantee ownership and resulting management costs and responsibilities as well as the NGO (Minnesota Deer Hunters Association) preferences.

Considering the multiple options in terms of these criteria, NWLT recommends that after NWLT purchases 30 parcels (1095 acres), the two parcels (81 acres) with infrastructure of value be conveyed/donated to MDHA with the NOFR. MDHA will purchase the buildings for 2025 appraised value from NWLT (i.e., one cabin/garage and four outbuildings). NWLT will return sale proceeds to OHF.

MDHA may decide before the conveyance/donation that they do not want all of the four outbuildings. NWLT will remove the unwanted buildings and convey/donate land and sell remaining buildings to MDHA. These terms will be stipulated in a purchase/donation agreement between the two parties.

NWLT does not want to be responsible (i.e., financial, liability, etc.) for land or building management for an extended period of time. Ideally, both parcels will be conveyed/donated and the buildings sold to MDHA by the 2026 hunting season.

NWLT will comply with all LSOHC requirements and procedures. NWLT believes that the recommended option can be accomplished while meeting Statute requirements with LSOHC Staff and DNR Grants approval. This option will not conflict with DNR management of the WMA. This option can be accomplished by NWLT with Grant financial reimbursement. This option is the least costly transaction to implement. MDHA reports that they are able to cover their purchase costs for receiving the land at no cost with the NOFR and purchasing the buildings.

Thank you for your review and direction.